

IN THE CLAIMS:

We Claim:

1. (currently amended) [A synthetic peptide comprising] A composition comprising a synthetic shared epitope peptide, said peptide consisting of the sequence DKCLA [Asp Lys Cys Leu Ala] [SEQ ID NO: 16].
2. (new) The peptide of Claim 1, wherein said peptide is conjugated to at least one moiety.
3. (new) The peptide of Claim 2, wherein said moiety is a lipophilic moiety in the form of a saturated or unsaturated radical.
4. (new) The peptide of Claim 3, wherein said moiety comprises a hydrocarbyl or carboxylic acyl having at least 5 carbon atoms.
5. (new) The peptide of Claim 3, wherein said lipophilic moiety is conjugated at the carboxy terminus of said peptide.
6. (new) The peptide of Claim 1, wherein said peptide is amidated at the carboxy terminus of said peptide.
7. (new) The peptide of Claim 3, wherein said lipophilic moiety is conjugated at the amino terminus of said peptide.
8. (new) The peptide of Claim 1, wherein said peptide is acetylated at the amino terminus of said peptide.
9. (new) The peptide of Claim 1, wherein said liophilic moiety is conjugated to both the amino terminus and carboxy terminus of said peptide.

10. (new) The peptide of Claim 1, wherein said peptide is conjugated to at least one carrier molecule.
11. (new) A composition comprising:
 - a) a synthetic peptide consisting of the sequence DKCLA [Asp Lys Cys Leu Ala] [SEQ ID NO: 16];
 - b) an aqueous medium; and
 - c) at least one compound selected from the group comprising a buffer, a preservative and a salt.
12. (new) The composition of Claim 11, wherein said preservative is an antimicrobial preservative.
13. (new) The composition of Claim 11 further comprising a local anesthetic.
14. (new) The composition of Claim 13, wherein said local anesthetic is selected from the group comprising lidocaine and procaine.
15. (new) The composition of Claim 11, wherein said synthetic peptide is present at 1 – 1000 micrograms.
16. (new) The composition of Claim 11 further comprising at least one compound selected from the group comprising a steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, an analgesic, gold, penicillamine, an antimalarial compound, sulfasazine, an immunosuppressive compound, methotrexate, azathioprine, and cyclophosphamide.
17. (new) The composition of Claim 11, wherein said composition is configured for intra-articular administration.

18. (new) The composition of Claim 11, wherein said composition is configured for intravenous administration.
19. (new) A synthetic peptide consisting of the sequence DKCLA [Asp Lys Cys Leu Ala] [SEQ ID NO: 16].
20. (new) The synthetic peptide of Claim 19, wherein said peptide is conjugated to at least one moiety.